

Enhancing Visual Art Education Identity for Sustainable Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

Enhancing visual art education of identity involves incorporating diverse perspectives and culturally relevant content in art curriculum to foster a deeper understanding of self and others. By utilizing inclusive teaching strategies, educators can create a space for students to explore their own cultural identity while developing empathy and respect for other cultures. This approach can ultimately lead to a more inclusive and socially conscious society. Visual art education of identity for sustainable development in Nigeria entails promoting the learning of art that reflects the cultural values, history, and identity of the Nigerian people while advancing sustainable development goals. Through visual art education, learners can appreciate and preserve their cultural heritage, gain creative skills, and contribute to the socio-economic development of their communities. Additionally, this approach fosters an appreciation for environmental conservation and promotes social justice, equity, and inclusion. By integrating sustainable development principles into visual art education, Nigerian learners can become agents of positive change in their communities and contribute to a more sustainable future for all.

Keywords: Visual Arts, Identity, Sustainable Development, Education

Introduction

Visual arts is a broad term that encompasses a wide range of creative expressions that are primarily visual in nature. It refers to any art form that is created primarily for visual perception, such as painting, drawing, sculpture, printmaking, photography, filmmaking, video production, and many other forms of digital art. The concept of visual arts is about creating something that is visually appealing and meaningful, whether it's for personal expression, entertainment, or communication. Visual

arts is an umbrella term that encompasses a wide variety of creative practices that are primarily focused on visual perception. It is a form of artistic expression that seeks to engage viewers through visual elements such as line, color, shape, texture, and form.

Visual arts can be both representational and abstract, and they can communicate a wide range of ideas and emotions. They can capture the beauty of the natural world, explore human emotions and experiences, or comment on social and political issues. Visual arts are a diverse and constantly evolving field that celebrates the power of human imagination and creativity to transform the world we live in. Visual arts mean different thing to different people in the world, as Nigeria as a nation means different thing to different people all over the world. To some, Nigeria may mean a rich oil nation, to some, dubious and most corrupt nation in the world. Naturally, one may see Nigeria as “this” or “that”. However, no matter the perspective anyone decides to look at it, Nigeria is the most populous country in West Africa, with more than 275 ethnic groups as noted by Egonwa (2017:97).

Visual arts have been an integral part of human culture for thousands of years, and they continue to be an important means of creative expression in contemporary society. Visual arts can be found in a variety of contexts, including museums, galleries, public spaces, and private collections. They are often used in education, therapy, and cultural exchange, and they play an important role in shaping our understanding of the world around us.

Prospects of Visual Arts Education in Nigeria

Visual arts education in Nigeria has the potential to play a significant role in the country's economic, social and cultural development. Nigeria has a rich history of art and cultural heritage, and visual arts education can be leveraged to promote this heritage, generate employment opportunities and foster creativity. Some of the prospects of visual arts education in Nigeria are:

1. **Promotion of cultural heritage:** Visual arts education in Nigeria can help promote the country's rich cultural heritage through the study and practice of traditional and contemporary art forms. This

can contribute to the preservation of cultural identity and promote national unity.

2. **Employment opportunities:** The visual arts industry has the potential to provide employment opportunities for many Nigerians. The industry includes fields such as graphic design, animation, fine arts, photography, and multimedia. With the right skills and training, individuals can pursue careers in these fields, thereby contributing to the economy.
3. **Creative economy:** Visual arts education can contribute to the growth of Nigeria's creative economy. The creative economy includes fields such as fashion, film, music, and design, and is a growing sector in Nigeria. Visual arts education can equip individuals with the skills to participate in this sector and contribute to its growth.
4. **Fostering creativity:** Visual arts education can foster creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. These skills are essential in various fields and can contribute to the development of innovative solutions to societal problems.
5. **Cross-disciplinary learning:** Visual arts education can promote cross-disciplinary learning by integrating other fields such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). This integration can lead to the development of new and innovative products and services that can contribute to the country's economic growth.
6. **International recognition:** Nigeria has produced many renowned visual artists such as Ben Enwonwu, Bruce Onobrakpeya, and Njideka Akunyili Crosby, who have gained international recognition. Visual arts education can contribute to the production of more talented artists who can represent Nigeria on the global stage.

However, to fully realize the prospects of visual arts education in Nigeria, there is a need for adequate investment in the sector. The government, private organizations, and individuals can contribute to the development of the visual arts industry by providing funding, infrastructure, and training programs. Furthermore, there is a need for the curriculum to be constantly updated to reflect current trends and

practices in the industry. Additionally, more collaborations and partnerships between industry players and educational institutions can lead to the creation of more opportunities for students and professionals alike.

Ways to Enhance Visual Arts Education

- 1. Integrate technology:** Introducing technology into visual arts education can enhance student engagement and creativity. For example, using digital tools like graphic tablets and software can help students create digital art. Technology can be a powerful tool for enhancing visual art education. Teachers can use digital tools to create interactive lessons, virtual field trips to museums, and online portfolios for students. Additionally, technology can provide students with new ways to express themselves, such as digital drawing and painting software.
- 2. Encourage creativity:** Encourage students to be creative in their artwork. Allow them to explore different mediums and techniques, and provide them with opportunities to experiment and express themselves. Teachers should encourage students to explore different mediums, techniques, and styles of art. This can be done through hands-on activities, visits to galleries, and exposure to different cultures and traditions.
- 3. Collaborate with artists:** Inviting artists to the classroom can give students a chance to learn from professionals and gain new perspectives on art. This can be done through in-person visits or virtual workshops. Feedback is an essential component of visual art education. Teachers should provide constructive feedback to students that focuses on improving their skills and techniques. Additionally, students should be encouraged to provide feedback to their peers to develop critical thinking and evaluation skills.
- 4. Connect art to real-world issues:** Encouraging students to use their art to address real-world issues can help them see the relevance of their work and its potential impact. Visual art education can be enhanced by engaging with the local community. Teachers can organize art exhibitions, collaborative projects with local artists, and visits to art studios and galleries.
- 5. Emphasize art history:** Teaching art history can help students

understand the context and significance of different art movements and styles. This can help them develop a deeper appreciation and understanding of art. Art history is an essential component of visual art education. Teachers should incorporate art history into their lessons to help students develop a deeper understanding of different styles and movements. Additionally, teachers can use art history to teach students about different cultural perspectives and historical contexts.

- 6. Make art accessible:** Providing students with access to art supplies and resources outside of the classroom can help them continue to develop their skills and interests.

Enhancing visual arts education involves providing students with opportunities to explore, experiment, and express themselves creatively, while also emphasizing the relevance and significance of art in the world around us.

What is Visual Arts Identity

Visual arts identity refers to the unique characteristics and qualities that are reflected in an artist's work and that are associated with their individual identity. These may include cultural influences, personal experiences, beliefs, and values, as well as technical skills and artistic style.

In visual arts, artists often use their work to express their individual identity and to communicate their personal experiences and perspectives to their audience. This can take many different forms, depending on the artist's chosen medium and style.

Visual arts identity can also be influenced by the broader cultural and historical context in which the artist is working. For example, an artist's identity may be shaped by their cultural heritage, their experiences of discrimination or oppression, or their engagement with social and political issues.

In this sense, visual arts identity is not just about the individual artist, but also about the broader social and cultural context in which their work is

situated. By exploring the unique characteristics and qualities that are reflected in an artist's work, we can gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of individual and collective identity in visual arts.

What is Visual Arts Education of Identity

Visual arts education of identity refers to a type of art education that focuses on helping students explore and express their personal identities through visual art. This approach to visual arts education is based on the belief that art can be a powerful tool for self-expression and self-discovery.

In visual arts education of identity, students are encouraged to create art that reflects their personal experiences, beliefs, and cultural backgrounds. The goal is to help students develop a deeper understanding of themselves and others by exploring their own identities and the identities of those around them.

This type of education can take many different forms. For example, students may be asked to create self-portraits, collage pieces that represent different aspects of their identities, or abstract works that express their emotions and feelings.

Visual arts education of identity can be particularly valuable for students who are from marginalized or underrepresented communities. By providing a platform for students to explore their identities through art, this approach to education can help students develop a stronger sense of self and a greater appreciation for the diversity of human experience.

How to Enhance Visual Arts Education of Identity in Nigeria

- 1. Incorporate local culture and traditions into the curriculum:**
Nigeria is a culturally diverse country with a rich artistic heritage. Visual arts educators can enhance the education of identity by incorporating local art forms, techniques, and cultural traditions into their teaching (Adeyemo, 2017). This approach will help students to appreciate their own cultural heritage and develop a deeper sense of identity (Babajide, 2019).
- 2. Encourage students to express their personal experiences:**

Students should be encouraged to use visual art as a medium for self-expression (Arowosafe et.al. 2015). This can be achieved by creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment that encourages students to explore their personal experiences and identity through art.

3. **Provide access to resources and facilities:** Visual arts education requires access to resources such as materials, tools, and facilities. Educators should ensure that students have access to these resources to enable them to express their ideas and develop their artistic skills.
4. **Engage with the community:** Visual arts education should be connected to the broader community. Educators can enhance the education of identity by organizing visits to local art museums, galleries, and cultural centers. This approach will help students to appreciate the diversity of visual art forms and their cultural significance.

Visual Arts Education of Identity as a means for Sustainable Development

Visual arts education is an essential tool for fostering the development of identity, which, in turn, can contribute to sustainable development. Identity formation is a multifaceted process that involves an individual's sense of self, including their beliefs, values, and cultural background. Visual arts education can help individuals understand and explore their identity, leading to greater self-awareness, self-confidence, and a stronger sense of purpose. This, in turn, can lead to individuals who are more engaged and invested in their communities, working towards the goal of sustainable development (Anderson, 2014).

Research has shown that visual arts education can play a vital role in shaping individual and collective identities. In a study published in the *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, researchers found that visual arts education "has the potential to support students in developing positive self-concepts and creating positive self-identities." The study also found that visual arts education can help individuals develop a sense of empathy and understanding towards others, leading to greater social cohesion and community engagement.

Furthermore, visual arts education can help individuals connect with their cultural heritage and history, which can be crucial for sustainable development. As noted by UNESCO, "the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage is essential to sustainable development." Visual arts education can help individuals learn about their cultural heritage, leading to a greater sense of connection and investment in preserving and promoting their cultural traditions (UNESCO, 2015).

In addition, Hidayah et.al. (2019) posits that visual arts education can foster creativity and innovation, which are essential for sustainable development. A study published in the Journal of Environmental Education found that "arts-based learning can contribute to the development of creative and innovative solutions to environmental challenges." Visual arts education can encourage individuals to think outside the box and come up with new and innovative ideas to address environmental, social, and economic issues.

Visual arts education of identity can play a significant role in sustainable development by promoting individual and collective well-being, preserving cultural heritage, and fostering social and environmental awareness.

Here are some ways in which visual arts education of identity can contribute to sustainable development:

- 1. Promoting well-being:** Visual arts education of identity can help individuals to develop a sense of self-worth, confidence, and purpose. By expressing themselves through art, individuals can gain a deeper understanding of their own identities, emotions, and experiences. This, in turn, can lead to improved mental health and well-being. Visual arts education has been found to have positive effects on well-being and mental health (Kaimal et al., 2016).
- 2. Preserving cultural heritage:** By teaching students about their cultural heritage and encouraging them to create art that reflects their cultural identity, educators can help to preserve and promote cultural diversity. Visual arts education can play an important role in preserving cultural heritage by promoting traditional art forms and cultural practices (Arhin and Adu-Gyamfi, 2020).

3. **Fostering social and environmental awareness:** Visual arts education of identity can promote social and environmental awareness by encouraging students to create art that addresses social and environmental issues (Saldaña, 2015). By using art as a medium for social and environmental activism, students can raise awareness and inspire change in their communities.
4. **Enhancing creativity and innovation:** Visual arts education of identity can enhance creativity and innovation by encouraging students to explore new ideas and approaches to visual art. By promoting experimentation, exploration, and innovation, educators can help to develop the creative and critical thinking skills that are essential for sustainable development (Sousa & Pinto, 2018).

Visual Art Education as a Catalyst for Sustainable Development

Visual art education can play a vital role in promoting sustainable development by cultivating a sense of environmental responsibility and encouraging creative problem-solving skills. Art education allows individuals to explore their connection to the environment and understand the impact of their actions on the natural world. By incorporating sustainability into art curriculum, students are empowered to make informed decisions that benefit themselves, their communities, and the planet.

One way that visual art education can promote sustainability is by highlighting the interconnectedness of all living things. Through art-making, students can learn about ecosystems, food chains, and the delicate balance of the natural world. By creating artworks that celebrate biodiversity, students can develop an appreciation for the rich variety of life on earth and the importance of preserving it.

Another way that art education can promote sustainability is by encouraging the use of sustainable materials and practices in art-making. By teaching students to use recycled materials or natural resources, art teachers can help reduce waste and minimize the environmental impact of art production. Furthermore, teaching about sustainable practices such as composting, gardening, and renewable energy can be integrated

into art curriculum, allowing students to learn about environmental conservation and apply these principles in their daily lives.

Art education can also play a role in promoting sustainable development by fostering creativity and innovation. Creative problem-solving skills are crucial for addressing complex environmental issues and developing sustainable solutions. By teaching students to think creatively, art education can help to cultivate a generation of problem solvers who are equipped to tackle the challenges of the future.

Moreover, visual art education can encourage critical thinking and reflection on social and environmental issues. Artworks can act as a powerful medium for social commentary and activism, providing a platform for students to express their opinions and advocate for change. Through art-making, students can develop a critical perspective on issues such as climate change, environmental justice, and sustainability, and communicate their ideas to a wider audience.

Visual art education can be a powerful tool for promoting sustainable development. By incorporating sustainability into art curriculum, students can learn about their connection to the environment, develop an appreciation for biodiversity, and cultivate creative problem-solving skills. Moreover, art education can encourage critical thinking, reflection, and social activism, providing students with the tools to create positive change in the world.

Prospects of Visual Arts Education of Identity in Nigeria

Visual arts education plays a significant role in shaping and expressing cultural identity in Nigeria. Nigeria, as a nation with a rich cultural heritage, offers various artistic expressions and styles that highlight its diverse identity. Visual arts education can help individuals and communities to appreciate, preserve, and showcase their identity and culture.

Prospects of visual arts education in Nigeria are numerous. Firstly, it offers opportunities for self-expression and creativity. Through visual arts education, individuals can express their thoughts, beliefs, and

feelings through different artistic mediums such as painting, sculpture, and photography. This helps in promoting self-awareness and developing one's personal identity.

Secondly, visual arts education can promote intercultural dialogue and understanding. Nigeria is home to over 250 ethnic groups, each with its unique culture and art forms. Visual arts education can promote cross-cultural exchanges and foster mutual understanding and appreciation of diverse cultural identities.

Thirdly, visual arts education can create economic opportunities. The Nigerian visual arts industry has experienced a tremendous boost in recent years due to the increasing demand for African art globally. Visual arts education can equip individuals with the necessary skills to become professional artists, art dealers, or art educators, thereby creating job opportunities and contributing to the national economy.

Lastly, visual arts education can foster national unity and identity. Art has the power to bring people together and promote a sense of belongingness. Through visual arts education, individuals can learn about Nigeria's history, culture, and heritage, and develop a sense of pride and patriotism.

Visual arts education offers immense prospects in shaping and expressing cultural identity in Nigeria. It can promote creativity, intercultural dialogue, economic opportunities, and national unity. Therefore, there is a need for the Nigerian government and other stakeholders to invest in visual arts education to harness its potentials fully.

Conclusion

Visual arts education can be a powerful tool for fostering the development of identity, which, in turn, can contribute to sustainable development. By helping individuals connect with their cultural heritage, fostering creativity and innovation, and promoting empathy and understanding towards others, visual arts education can lead to individuals who are more engaged and invested in their communities,

working towards a more sustainable future.

Enhancing visual art education to explore identity has the potential to cultivate a deeper understanding and appreciation of cultural heritage, foster social inclusion, and promote self-expression. By providing students with the tools and knowledge to create art that reflects their personal experiences and cultural backgrounds, educators can empower them to connect with their identity and share their unique perspectives with the world. Through this process, visual art education can serve as a means of promoting diversity, encouraging dialogue, and celebrating individuality.

Overall, visual arts education of identity can play a critical role in sustainable development by promoting individual and collective well-being, preserving cultural heritage, fostering social and environmental awareness, and enhancing creativity and innovation.

Recommendations

Enhancing the visual arts education of identity in Nigeria can involve a range of approaches and strategies. Here are some recommendations:

- 1. Incorporate Nigerian cultural heritage into the curriculum:** The Nigerian cultural heritage is rich and diverse. Integrating it into the curriculum can provide students with a better understanding and appreciation of their cultural identity. This can involve teaching Nigerian traditional art forms, such as pottery, beadwork, weaving, and carving.
- 2. Encourage the use of technology:** Technology has become a vital tool in the art world. Incorporating technology into the curriculum can help students to create more complex artworks that reflect their identities. For example, students can use graphic design software to create digital art that reflects their cultural identity.
- 3. Promote intercultural understanding:** Encouraging intercultural understanding is critical to enhancing the visual arts education of identity in Nigeria. Students should be exposed to different cultures and taught to appreciate them. This can be

achieved through cultural exchange programs, field trips, and cultural events.

4. **Collaborate with local artists:** Collaborating with local artists can provide students with the opportunity to learn from professionals. This can help to inspire students and expose them to different techniques and styles.
5. **Provide access to art supplies:** Access to art supplies can be a challenge for many students in Nigeria. Schools should provide adequate art supplies to enable students to create artworks that reflect their identity. This can involve providing materials such as paint, paper, pencils, and brushes.
6. **Foster creativity:** Creativity is a critical component of visual arts education. Encouraging students to be creative and take risks can help them to develop their artistic skills and create artworks that reflect their identity.

By implementing these recommendations, Nigerian schools can enhance the visual arts education of identity and help students to develop a better understanding and appreciation of their cultural heritage.

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